

Kim Jong Un observes missile test to enhance nuclear capabilities

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has observed the test firing of a new type of tactical guided weapon aimed at boosting the country's nuclear capabilities, the North's KCNA state news agency reported on Sunday.

The report comes amid signs North Korea could soon resume nuclear testing according to South Korean and US officials and after Mr. Kim broke a self-imposed moratorium on intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) testing with a launch last month.

South Korea's military said on Sunday it had detected two projectiles launched on Saturday from the North's east coast towards the sea. The projectiles flew about 110 kilometers (68 miles) with an apogee of 25 kilometers and maximum speed of less than Mach 4, indicating they were short-range missiles.

The KCNA report gave no details on the launch but linked it to the North's nuclear objectives.

"The new-type tactical guided weapon system ... is of great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the frontline long-range artillery units and enhancing the efficiency in the operation of tactical nukes," KCNA said.

"[Kim] gave important instructions on further building up the defense capabilities and nuclear combat forces of the country," it said.

North Korea has been developing short-range ballistic missiles that analysts say are designed to evade missile defenses and strike targets in the South in the event of a war.

On April 5, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim, said North Korea opposes war but would use nuclear weapons to strike South Korea if attacked, in a warning seen aimed at the South's incoming conservative president, Yoon Suk-yeol.

A Yoon spokesperson, Bae Hyun-jin, said there was nothing new or surprising in the North's "show of force" as a new administration comes in.

South Korea's current president Moon Jae-in, who will leave office on May 10, has received real-time briefings on the North's missile launch, his office said.

RESTORING NUCLEAR TEST SITE

Ankit Panda, senior fellow at the US-based Carnegie En-

dowment for International Peace, said the weapon appears to be the North's first tactical nuclear weapons delivery system, while pointing to indications of work to restore North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site.

"You don't have to be particularly imaginative to put this two and two together," Panda said.

US and South Korean officials have noted activity at the Punggye-ri site which could be preparations for a test, although the timing and nature of that were unclear.

As early as 2017, the US Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that North Korea was able to miniaturize nuclear weapons across the spectrum of its missiles, from short-range ballistic missiles to ICBMs.

Kim Jong Un in Jan. 2021 said the country was able to "miniaturize, lighten and standardize nuclear weapons and to make them tactical ones". He also outlined goals of developing other weapons such as hypersonic missiles and spy satellites, which have been tested this year.

Duyeon Kim, a North Korea expert at the US-based Center for a New American Security, said the timing could be taken as a protest against anticipated joint US-South Korea military drills.

On Saturday the US 2nd Infantry Division, based in South Korea, shared photos of troops test-firing a multiple launch rocket system, although the timing of the event was not indicated.

A US Defense Department spokesperson on Sunday acknowledged the latest missile test. "We are aware of the North Korean statement that they conducted a test of a long-range artillery system," Lt. Col. Marty Meiners said.

US nuclear envoy Sung Kim will visit Seoul on Monday to discuss a response to the North's recent missile launches with his South Korean counterparts.

Kim has said the United States is open to talks without preconditions but Pyongyang has rebuffed those overtures, accusing Washington of hostile policies evidenced by sanctions and military drills.

On Friday, North Korea celebrated the 110th anniversary of the birth of state founder Kim Il Sung. — **Reuters**

Biden to host Southeast Asian leaders in Washington next month

PRESIDENT Joseph R. Biden will host leaders of ASEAN countries on May 12-13 in Washington, signaling US efforts to engage with the group in the competition with China for regional influence.

A White House statement announcing the special summit with the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations said the US administration shares a "commitment to advance an

Indo-Pacific that is free and open, secure, connected, and resilient."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken criticized China's "aggressive actions" in Asia on a trip to the region in December, prompting the Foreign

Ministry in Beijing to say the US was "inciting bloc confrontation."

ASEAN's most populous members are Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. China isn't a member. — **Bloomberg**

Russia tells fighters in Mariupol to surrender to save their lives

RUSSIA told Ukrainian forces fighting in Mariupol to lay down arms on Sunday morning to save their lives, but there were no immediate reports of activity three hours after the ultimatum took effect at 0300 GMT in the strategic southeastern port.

Air raid sirens sounded across the country early in the day, a regular occurrence, and a morning report from the Ukrainian military said Russian air strikes on Mariupol continued while there were "assault operations near the seaport."

Local media reported an explosion in the capital Kyiv but Mykola Povoroznyk, the city's deputy mayor, said there were no explosions and air defense systems had prevented Russian attacks.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its troops had cleared the urban area of Mariupol and only a small contingent of Ukrainian fighters remained in a giant steelworks on Saturday.

Moscow's claim to have all but taken control of Mariupol, scene of the war's heaviest fighting and worst humanitarian catastrophe, could not be independently verified. It would be the first major city to have fallen to Russian forces since the Feb. 24 invasion.

"Taking into account the catastrophic situation that has devel-

oped at the Azovstal metallurgical plant, as well as being guided by purely humane principles, the Russian Armed Forces offer the militants of nationalist battalions and foreign mercenaries from 06:00 (Moscow time) on April 17, 2022, to stop any hostilities and lay down their arms," the defense ministry said in a statement.

"All who lay down their arms are guaranteed that their lives will be spared," it said, adding that the defenders could leave the plant by 10 a.m. without arms or ammunition.

There was no immediate response from Kyiv.

The Azovstal plant, described as a fortress in a city, lies in an industrial area that looks out to the Sea of Azov and covers more than 11 square km (4 square miles), containing myriad buildings, blast furnaces and rail tracks.

The city's defenders include Ukrainian marines, motorized brigades, a National Guard brigade and the Azov Regiment, a militia created by far-right nationalists that was later incorporated into the National Guard. It was not immediately known how many were in the steelworks.

"The situation is very difficult" in Mariupol, President Volodymyr Zelensky told the Ukrainska Pravda news portal. "Our soldiers are blocked, the wounded are

blocked. There is a humanitarian crisis... Nevertheless, the guys are defending themselves."

The Ukrainian military said Russian warplanes that took off from Belarus had fired missiles at the Lviv region near the Polish border and four cruise missiles were shot down by Ukrainian air defenses.

The western city, relatively unscathed so far, has served as a haven for refugees and international aid agencies.

TWISTED STEEL, BLASTED CONCRETE

In Mariupol, Reuters journalists reached the giant Illich steelworks, one of two metals plants where defenders had held out in underground tunnels and bunkers. Moscow claimed to have captured it on Friday.

The factory was reduced to a ruin of twisted steel and blasted concrete, with no sign of defenders present. Several bodies of civilians lay scattered on nearby streets.

The Russian defense ministry said its troops had "completely cleared" Mariupol's urban area of Ukrainian forces and blockaded the "remnants" in the Azovstal steelworks, RIA news agency said. It said that as of Saturday, Ukrainian forces in the city had lost more than 4,000 personnel.

Mr. Zelensky accused Russia of "deliberately trying to destroy everyone" in Mariupol and said his government was in touch with the defenders. He did not address Moscow's claim that Ukrainian forces were no longer in urban districts.

He said also that "extermination" of the fighters in Mariupol would put an end to any form of negotiations with Russia.

Russia had said on Friday it would intensify long-range strikes in retaliation for unspecified acts of "sabotage" and "terrorism," hours after it confirmed the sinking of its Black Sea flagship, the *Moskva*.

Kyiv and Washington say the ship, whose sinking has become a symbol of Ukrainian defiance, was hit by Ukrainian missiles. Moscow says it sank after a fire and its crew of around 500 were evacuated.

Russia's Defense Ministry published video of the head of the navy, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, meeting on a parade ground with about a hundred sailors it said were members of the crew. — **Reuters**

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link bit.ly/Russia041822

Pope condemns cruelty of Ukraine war at Easter vigil

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis condemned the cruelty of the war in Ukraine on Saturday at an Easter vigil Mass he attended but at which he did not preside, presumably because of leg pain that has forced him to curtail activities.

The Mass was attended by Ivan Fedorov, the mayor of Melitopol, who was detained by Russian forces last month and later freed in a prisoner exchange.

Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re replaced the pope as the main celebrant at the service, which involved a procession in near-total darkness up the central nave of Christendom's largest church.

The pope sat at the front of Saint Peter's Basilica in a large white chair on the side, appeared alert and stood during the reading of the gospel.

He read his homily while sitting but in his normal voice and later rose to baptize seven adult converts to Catholicism.

The pope departed from his prepared text to acknowledge the presence of Fedorov, his family

and three Ukrainian parliamentarians sitting in the front.

He spoke of the "darkness of war, of cruelty." "All of us pray for you and with you. We pray because there is so much suffering. We can only give you our company, our prayers and say to you 'courage, we accompany you,'" Francis said.

He ended by saying "Christ is risen" in Ukrainian. The Vatican said Francis met privately with the Ukrainian delegation before the Mass.

Presiding at the Mass, which was attended by 5,500 people, would have required long periods of standing during the chanting and gospel readings, genuflecting at the altar.

The 85-year-old pope suffers from sciatica, which causes pain in one leg and results in a pronounced limp. Recently Francis also has had a flare up of pain in his right knee. The condition appears to come and go.

A program issued by the Vatican on Friday listed the pope as chief celebrant at the Saturday evening

service. The Vatican gave no official reason for the change.

On Friday afternoon, the pope was well enough to walk the entire aisle both at the start and the end of a Good Friday service in the basilica but he did not prostrate himself on the floor as he normally does during that service.

He had to curtail some of his movements during a trip to Malta at the start of April and also had to ask a cardinal to stand in for him at a Mass in December.

The Holy Week activities, which culminate on Sunday, mark the first time since 2019 that the public has been allowed to attend following two years of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) restrictions.

On Easter Sunday, the most important day in the Christian liturgical calendar, he is due to say Mass in St. Peter's Square and then deliver his twice-yearly *Urbi et Orbi* (to the city and the world) message and blessing. — **Reuters**

Booster, from S1/1

The Department of Health (DoH) has said only 11.8 million out of 45 million Filipinos who are eligible for booster shots have received the additional COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) President Rosemarie B. Ong said via mobile phone message that the government should urge people to take their booster shots as soon as possible and to continue to adhere to health protocols.

"Just like any variant, once (these variants) spread, they will be a threat. However, let us remain hopeful that this will not reach our country. Let's push for more people to avail of the booster shots," Ms. Ong said.

Mr. Cua said businesses must start "requiring their employees to get their booster shots."

"The solution is still within our reach. It isn't too late yet but we (need to) get our act together on this," he added.

Asian Institute of Management economist John Paolo R. Rivera said the government should also speed up the vaccination rollout while COVID-19 infections are currently low.

"The new surge is always possible given new variants. We should have learned from the past two years that it is best to be preventive than reactive," Mr. Rivera said in a Viber message.

"It's a choice of getting vaccinated/boosted with compliance with minimum health standards or procrastinate vaccination with a relaxed safety protocol at the expense of the economy, at the expense of jobs," he added.

The DoH data also showed 65.9 million Filipinos have completed their vaccine doses as of March 30. This was below the government's target to fully inoculate 77 million Filipinos by the end of March.

The Food and Drug Administration last week approved the second booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for the elderly, immunocompromised individuals, and frontline health workers.

"This second booster dose shall be given at least four months after the first booster. For moderately and severely immunocompromised patients, the second booster could be given earlier subject to the attending physician's assessment," the Health department said in a statement.

Play-to-earn, from S1/1

shows how such platforms fail to deliver the levels of decentralization that are necessary to ensure sufficient levels of cybersecurity," Mr. Gupta said in an e-mail.

Sky Mavis, which operates *Axie Infinity*, earlier said that about 35% of the game's traffic comes from the Philippines. The company said it raised \$150 million in funds which will be used to reimburse players that were affected by the heist.

Despite regulators issuing warnings on risks related to cryptocurrency, Mr. Gupta said gamers have remained "largely undeterred."

He earlier said the interest for play-to-earn games rose as Filipinos sought new sources of income amid the pandemic.

"Authorities should reach out to gaming guilds in the country and coordinate with them to provide education about the risks inherent with play-to-earn gaming activity," Mr. Gupta said.

"They should also consider imposing restrictions on the transactions of gamers at the point of conversion to fiat currency since this is an area that is within the government's jurisdiction," he added.

BSP Governor Benjamin E. Diokno previously said they are continuously monitoring crypto-related activities that are used in online games. He said they are discussing with other regulators on the appropriate approach for *Axie Infinity* and other gaming platforms.

The Philippines is under increased monitoring as it was included in the "gray list" of the Financial Action Task Force in June 2021. It needs to prove it has implemented tighter restriction measures to prevent dirty money and terrorism financing activities.

The government hopes to exit the gray list on or before January 2023. — **Luz Wendy T. Noble**

Rules, from S1/1

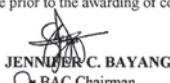

Lenders should also look into whether the financial difficulties, insolvency, or default of one counterparty could in turn spill over to other counterparties in terms of repayments of liabilities.

The central bank said lenders should also assess the funding source of counterparties and if there are no alternative provider of funds that could support the counterparties in case of a default from the major funding source.

"In cases where the criteria do not automatically imply an economic dependence that results in two or more counterparties being connected, covered banks shall provide evidence to the BSP that a counterparty which is economically dependent to another, can still pay its liabilities within a reasonable period of time even if the latter's financial condition weakens," the BSP said.

Banks are expected to ensure they have the monitoring and reporting requirements related to their large exposures at any given time it will be verified by the BSP. These large exposures will be reported on a semi-annual basis or every June 30 or Dec. 31 of each year.

The BSP has stressed the banking system remained stable and well-capitalized despite the deterioration in banks' asset quality amid the pandemic. It attributed this to the regulatory reforms that were implemented following the Asian Financial Crisis and the Global Financial Crisis. — **Luz Wendy T. Noble**

CEBU I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.				
Bito-on, Dumanjug, Cebu Tel. No. 032-4719002 - Fax No. 032-4719313				
Invitation to Bid No. 2022-04				
Cebu I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CEBECO I) through the duly constituted Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), hereby invites all Manufacturers, Suppliers, Dealers, and Authorized franchised dealers to submit their respective bids for the procurement, supply, and delivery of materials for CEBECO I Sitio Electrification Projects .				
Item	Item Description	Funding Source	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) Inclusive of VAT (Php)	Non-refundable Bidding Documents Fee (Php)
A	Electrical Line Hardware, Insulators, Conductors, Dist. Transformers and Wires, Cut-Out and Arrestor Combination Assembly, Poles and Labor	NEA SUBSIDY	24,574,000.00	25,000.00
B	Kilowatt-hour Meters		645,050.00	1,000.00
C	House Wiring Materials and Labor		2,711,000.00	5,000.00
The submitted documents of each bidder shall be examined and checked for completeness based on the checklist of requirements.				
Bidding documents will be available starting on April 19, 2022 at 9:00 AM . Please get in touch with the BAC Secretariat Mr. Rommie Llanasa or Ms. Tessa Frances Aguilar through email at cebeco1bacadntwg@gmail.com or through Tel. No. (032) 471-9002 or at Mobile No. 09177089200 at CEBECO I Main Office, Bitoon, Dumanjug, Cebu for more details.				
All Bids shall be opened and read in the presence of Bidders or their duly authorized representatives. Bidders shall be required to put up a Bid Security in the amount equivalent to 2% of the ABC. The Bid Security shall be in the form of cash or manager's check and submitted together with their Bids. Only those bidders who have bought the bidding documents shall be allowed to attend or participate during the pre-bid conference where attendance is MANDATORY. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the attendance for both the Pre-bid Conference and Bid Opening through video conference via zoom link will be applicable. Zoom ID and password will be sent to your provided email address. However, for bidder/s who decide to physically attend both in Pre-bid Conference and Bid Opening, they should notify the BAC Secretariat at least a day ahead of the designated dates for administrative preparation purposes. There will be absolutely no selling of bidding documents after the pre-bid conference has already been conducted.				
The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows.				
Activities	Schedule			
Release of Invitation to Bid	April 18, 2022			
Pre-Bid Conference	April 27, 2022 (Wednesday), 1:30 PM Through video conference via Zoom platform or physical attendance at the CEBECO I Main Office, Bito-on, Dumanjug subject to Health protocols.			
Deadline of Submission & Opening of Bids	May 11, 2022 (Wednesday), 10:00 AM Through video conference via Zoom platform or physical attendance at the CEBECO I Main Office, Bito-on, Dumanjug subject to Health protocols.			
Issuance of Purchase Order	June 8, 2022 (Wednesday)			
Delivery Point	CEBECO I Warehouse CEBECO I Main Office, Bito-on, Dumanjug, Cebu			
CEBECO I reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to the awarding of contract, thereby without incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.				
 JENNIFER C. BAYANG BAC Chairman				
Noted by:				
 GETULIO Z. CRODUA, PEE General Manager				